

# Blue Crabs

## Talking Points

- The 2004 harvest was still below the long-term average harvest, but was considerably better than recent years.
- Although the overall abundance of blue crabs in Chesapeake Bay remains near historically low levels, the blue crab population in the Bay appears to have stabilized and is making modest gains.
- Last summer (2004), the Chesapeake Bay Stock Advisory Committee (CBSAC) advised fisheries managers in Virginia and Maryland to retain current blue crab fishery restrictions to preserve the long-term sustainability of the fishery.
- Bay-wide data are beginning to show that management actions taken by the states over the last four years may be working.
- While initial signs from these management actions show only a moderate increase in crab population, it is the first step toward restoring the long-term sustainability of the blue crab.

## Background

- The Chesapeake Bay Stock Advisory Committee (CBSAC) is comprised of members from NOAA, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, and the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory (University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science).
- CBSAC publishes a blue crab Advisory Report each year (spring).
  - The Advisory Report is prepared using data and information from four fishery independent trawl surveys as well as commercial and recreational information to obtain the most accurate status of the resource.
  - The annual advisory report compares the current status of the stocks to thresholds and targets that have been endorsed by the Bi-State Committee.
- The primary management goal of doubling the blue crab spawning potential for blue crabs has yet to be achieved. This management goal was adopted by the Bi-State Blue Crab Advisory Committee (comprised of management entities from Maryland, Virginia, and the Potomac River fisheries management agencies.)
- In 2004, NCBO initiated the development of a full assessment in coordination with multiple agencies/scientists in the Bay region (UMD, MDNR, VMRC, VIMD). This assessment will undergo a thorough scientific peer review and be published in fall 2005.
- The 2005 Blue Crab Advisory Report will be released near the end of June.